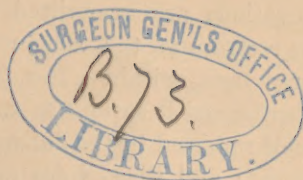


Thomas (J.G.)



COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF THE CÆSAREAN SECTION AND LAPARO- ELYTROTOMY IN NEW YORK.

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NEW YORK, April 19, 1878.

EDITOR NEW YORK MEDICAL JOURNAL:

Sir: ON the evening of March 21st, I read before the New York Academy of Medicine an essay entitled "Laparo-elytrotomy: a substitute for the Cæsarean Section." In the discussion which followed the reading of this paper, Dr. T. C. Finnell declared that he had come to the meeting in doubt as to whether the Cæsarean section or laparo-elytrotomy held out the better chance for life to mother and child, and that he went away with the same doubt existing in his mind.

This statement, from so judicious and candid a practitioner, took me by surprise, and at once stimulated me to a search into the statistics of the Cæsarean section, as relating to New York and its suburbs. The result of the inquiry has been this—since the settlement of Manhattan island by the Dutch, and the incorporation of "Nieu Amsterdam" in 1621, only one successful Cæsarean operation has occurred! By successful, be it understood, I mean resulting in the survival of both mother and child. How many operations have been performed, neither I, nor any one else, can say. No better proof of this assertion can be given than an allusion to the fact that, while in an elaborate article by Dr. Robert P. Harris, in the

April issue of the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, only three operations are accredited to this locality, there were, upon the rostrum at the Academy on the occasion just alluded to, three men, within a few feet of each other, who had together performed it seven times. Three of these operations Dr. Finnell reported in the debate of the night; one Dr. Barker performed; and three were performed by myself. I regret that the large meeting was not called upon for a *viva-voce* report of all the cases of which its members knew. My impression is that the number of which I had cognizance would certainly have been doubled.

It may, I think, be regarded as certain that, in over 250 years, whatever be the number of Cæsarean operations performed here, only one has resulted successfully for mother and child. Let us now compare these results with those of laparo-elytrotomy reported at the meeting alluded to. Four operations were performed upon women whose children were living when they were undertaken; in the fifth case the child had been previously perforated, and was surely dead. Four children were delivered alive and uninjured. Four women were viable at the time of operation; the fifth was moribund. Three survived, and are to-day in good health. Or, to state the matter in other words: at the time of operation four women and four children were viable, and, of these, three women and four children survived. Out of the eight lives put to the arbitrament of the procedure, seven were saved; and it must be borne in mind that the woman who died was almost moribund at the time that surgical interference was practiced.

I have neither time nor inclination to plunge into the unfathomable lake of statistics of the Cæsarean section. I take the small field in which laparo-elytrotomy has been performed, and compare the results of the two operations there; and, having done so, I cannot but reiterate my surprise that Dr. Finnell should not have been induced to look more favorably upon a procedure which had in eight years, the eight years too of its extreme infancy, produced treble the successes achieved by the other in over two centuries and a half.

A great deal of hope for the brilliant results to be achieved

in the future by the Cæsarean section has been excited by the application to it of all the precautions practiced in ovariectomy. I share this hope, most cordially and devoutly ; but it must be remembered that, during the last quarter of a century the obstetric surgeon has been freely instructed, in reference to the matter, by the great results of Atlee, Wells, Keith, Koeberlé, Peaslee, Dunlap, and Kimball. A quarter of the 19th century is equal to the whole of the 18th, as far as medical progress is concerned ; and results should long ago have been forthcoming.

I beg you and your readers to believe, however, that I am not pressing the adoption of this new operation upon the profession, but only its claims to being considered and tried. My wish is to prevent, if I can, its falling again, as it did in times past, into oblivion, when it is capable of producing such results as have already been demonstrated.

Respectfully yours, T. GAILLARD THOMAS.

